

VOTING ACTION PLAN 2006-2007

I. PURPOSE

To implement the Federal functions of the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)*, the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002 (NDAA FY02)*, the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 (NDAA FY05)*, and the *Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA)*, administer the provisions of DoD Directive 1000.4, "Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) ," disseminate information and guidance, and coordinate tasks related to the Program.

II. OBJECTIVE

To ensure that the following voters are provided all necessary voting information, including voting age requirements, election dates, Federal officers to be elected, constitutional amendments, other ballot proposals, and absentee registration and voting procedures:

1. Members of the U.S. Uniformed Services, including the Coast Guard, commissioned members of the Public Health Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Merchant Marine in active service;
2. Family members of (1.) above;
3. U.S. citizens temporarily outside the United States;
4. U.S. citizens outside the United States by virtue of employment;
5. Family members residing with (4.) above;
6. Other U.S. citizens residing outside the United States.

III. TASKS

- A. In accordance with 42 U.S.C. Sec. 1973ff (c)(1), the head of each Government department, agency, or other entity shall distribute balloting materials and develop a non-partisan program of information and education for all employees and family members covered by the *UOCAVA*. Each department or agency with employees or family members covered by the *UOCAVA* shall designate an individual to coordinate and administer a Voting Assistance Program for the department or agency to include, where practicable, those initiatives in one through five below and paragraph III. C. below. The name, address, and telephone number of this individual will be provided to the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program and will be prominently posted within departmental

or agency directories and websites. (See page 12 for contact information.) Departments and agencies shall not conduct independent surveys of the voting program without prior approval of the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program. In addition:

1. The Secretary of State shall designate a Voting Action Officer at Department of State headquarters to oversee the Department's program and a U.S. citizen employee at each U.S. embassy or consulate to assist to the fullest extent practicable other U.S. citizens residing outside the United States who are eligible to register and vote.
2. Each embassy and consulate should have sufficient quantities of materials to include Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) Forms, SF-76, and Federal Write-In Absentee Ballots (FWAB), SF-186, needed by U.S. citizens to register and vote. Embassies and consulates will also inform and educate U.S. citizens regarding their right to register and vote, and will publicize voter assistance programs.
3. Each embassy or consulate Voting Assistance Officer should work on a nonpartisan basis with recognized U.S. citizen organizations in the consular district to facilitate voter information, voter registration, and absentee ballot transmission.
4. The Department of State's Voting Action Officer shall coordinate with the Director, FVAP in the development and conduct of "Overseas Citizens Voters Week" (week of July 2-8, 2006) and "Absentee Voters Week" (week of October 8-14, 2006) for citizens outside the U.S. Develop programs to support the objective of creating an educational awareness and motivation to participate in the general election, and disseminate information on voting and voting assistance. Publicize the importance of early action on the part of the voter in order to obtain a ballot for the general election well in advance of election deadlines.
5. The Department's Voting Action Officer shall assist, as requested, embassy and consulate Voting Assistance Officers with post-election surveys of civilians outside the U.S. Survey findings will be used in formulating plans for future voting assistance programs.

B. The Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program shall:

1. Coordinate all aspects of the Federal Voting Assistance Program and perform all tasks assigned to the Presidential designee by the *UOCAVA*.
2. Advise DoD components and other executive branch departments and agencies concerning Federal, state, and local election laws and procedures.
3. Assist eligible *UOCAVA* citizens to register and vote.
4. Publicize the right of citizens to register and vote.

5. Review and coordinate the informational and educational efforts directed toward all persons covered by the *UOCAVA*.
6. Provide information on elections, including dates and offices involved.
7. Conduct a series of training workshops and program orientations at military installations in the continental United States and overseas locations for Voting Assistance Officers and for interested civilian groups and organizations.
8. Conduct training workshops and program orientations in consultation with state and local election officials.
9. Actively collect and share best practices identified by Service, Agency/Department, and states' voting assistance programs.
10. The Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program, shall be the sole DoD representative for contact and coordination with Federal, State, and local government entities for voting assistance and elections pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 1973ff(b)(1).

C. Commanders/Heads of DoD components shall:

1. Ensure continuing command support at all levels for the Voting Assistance Program.
2. Designate a uniformed officer of general or flag rank or a civilian employee in the Senior Executive Service in each military Service as the Senior Service Voting Representative who is responsible for Service-wide implementation of respective voting assistance programs. The senior officer will also manage the voting program for Reserve component members who have been called to active federal service. The Senior Service Voting Representative shall appoint a Service Voting Action Officer who preferably should be a civilian employee (GS-12 or higher) to administer the voting program for that Service. If a military member is assigned as Service Voting Action Officer, that member should be at least an O-4, if an officer, or at least an E-8, if an enlisted member.
3. Designate Voting Assistance Officers at every level of command with one senior Voting Assistance Officer on each installation and at each Major command who is assigned responsibility to coordinate the program of subordinate units and also coordinate with tenant command Voting Assistance Officers. Each Reserve component shall also designate a Voting Assistance Officer at its headquarters level. Where possible, Installation Voting Assistance Officers should be a DoD civilian GS-12 or higher. If a military member is assigned as the Installation Voting Assistance officer, that officer should hold the grade of O-4 or higher. Designate a Unit Voting Assistance Officer, at the O-2/E-7 level or above within each unit of 25 or more

permanently assigned members. An additional Unit Voting Assistance Officer should be assigned for each additional 50 members above the 25-member base. All such designations shall be in writing. Guidance for the maximum number of military and family members served by each unit Voting Assistance Officer will be provided by the Service Voting Action Officer as required by DoD Directive 1000.4. When military personnel, including noncommissioned officers, are designated as Voting Assistance Officers they are authorized in accordance with the provisions of DoD Directive 1000.4, to administer oaths in connection with registration and voting. All Voting Assistance Officers shall be trained and instructed in the procedures necessary to carry out their assigned responsibilities and be provided adequate time and resources to do so. Voting Assistance Officers should be readily available and equipped to give personal assistance to voters for Federal, state, local, and other jurisdictional elections during 2006-2007. In addition, any person who appears to need assistance due to physical disabilities or in reading or understanding English language material relating to voting or voter registration should receive immediate assistance in the appropriate language. Designate at least one well-advertised fixed location on bases, installations and ships where absentee voting materials and voting assistance are available to all military personnel.

4. Train all Service members (including Reserve component personnel) during years of elections for Federal offices on all aspects of the voting program, to include familiarity with the FPCA and FWAB.

5. Require commanders to rate Voting Assistance Officers on the way they perform their voting assistance duties. Commanders shall establish the evaluation criteria for Voting Assistance Officer performance within their command.

6. Encourage access to the FVAP Web Site (**www.fvap.gov**) for all voting information and materials. If Internet access is not available, ensure that voting information and related materials are obtained and disseminated in a timely manner, e.g., the *2006-07 Voting Assistance Guide*, and changes thereto; necessary quantities of the FPCA, for registration and absentee ballot requests; and FWAB. Publish procedures regarding ordering of FPCAs, FWABs, and other voting materials. FPCAs are to be purchased in sufficient quantities (recommend four per person, including eligible family members) to furnish registration and ballot request support for all primary and general elections for all military and eligible family members, and overseas DoD civilian personnel. Most States accept the on-line version of the FPCA which is available at **www.fvap.gov**. The FWAB may be used by Uniformed Services voters and eligible family members who are located both within CONUS and outside the U.S. and by all U.S. citizens outside the U.S. FWABs are to be purchased in sufficient quantities and disseminated (recommend one per person including eligible family members). The on-line version of the FWAB is available at **www.fvap.gov**. Adequate supplies must be made available to National Guard and Reserve Forces when activated. Some jurisdictions also allow use of the FWAB for other state and local elections.

This information is contained in the *2006-07 Voting Assistance Guide*. Additional exceptions will be announced by the Federal Voting Assistance Program, if and when they are authorized.

7. The Chief/Director of each Reserve component shall coordinate with the Senior Service Voting Representative and the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program, to maintain a contingency absentee voting program for the National Guard and Reserve units and personnel who have been activated and deployed. The contingency absentee voting program shall ensure that all deployed personnel – Active, Guard and Reserve – are able to exercise their absentee voting rights. The scope of the program should include the availability of adequate supplies of the *2006-07 Voting Assistance Guide*, FPCAs and FWABs. The Chief/Director of the Reserve component shall ensure a unit Voting Assistance Officer is appointed within each activated unit.

8. Ensure the delivery of FPCAs as follows:

- a. By January 15th of each calendar year deliver IN-HAND to all Armed Forces members and their eligible family members, overseas civilian employees of DoD components and eligible family members.
- b. By August 15, 2006 provide to Armed Forces members and their eligible family members, and to civilian employees of DoD components and eligible family members residing with or accompanying them, who are serving outside the territorial limits of the United States.
- c. By September 15, 2006 provide to Armed Forces members and their family members within the U.S.

This distribution is in addition to FPCAs provided for use in primary elections.

9. Emphasize the week of September 3–9, 2006, as “Armed Forces Voters Week.” Commanding officers and Voting Assistance Officers will develop comprehensive command-wide voting awareness and assistance programs and activities during this week to include local events publicizing the upcoming election and focusing on the importance of voting. Activities scheduled should include voting programs aimed at informing eligible voters on procedures required to obtain absentee ballots for the general elections including dissemination of supporting materials. These events should also be scheduled throughout the voting cycle to emphasize voting awareness and assistance before primary, special and run-off elections.

10. Emphasize the week of October 8-14, 2006, as Absentee Voters Week to encourage voters to complete and mail their absentee ballots so that they are received by local election offices in time to be counted for the November general election. *UOCAVA* voters should submit a Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot if they have not received their requested absentee ballot from their State in time to return it by the state’s deadline.

11. Require Inspectors General of the Military Services to include the command voting program as an item for specific review at every organizational level to ensure that persons covered by the *UOCAVA* are informed of, and

provided an opportunity to exercise, their right to vote. This review will include an assessment to determine that the command has appointed Voting Assistance Officers and ensured that they are trained and equipped to give proper assistance and that the command has sufficient quantities of materials to conduct an effective voting assistance program. Results of inspections pertaining to the voting program, including the need for additional command support, materials or training, will be reported to the cognizant commander and the Military Service Inspector General concerned. The Military Service Inspector General will report the findings to the DoD Inspector General, the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program, and the Senior Service Voting Representative in accordance with the provisions of DoD Directive 1000.4.

12. Establish and publicize the availability of communication lines (telephone, facsimile, e-mail, web page) to link unit Voting Assistance Officers with their respective Senior Service Voting Representative or Voting Action Officer at the departmental level. Emphasis shall be placed on providing rapid, accurate responses, and solutions to voting-oriented problems.

13. Establish and maintain a Voting homepage on the Component's website. This Voting homepage will provide Component-specific information regarding the Component's Voting Action Plan, the identification of and links to the assigned Installation and Major command Voting Assistance Officers within the Component, procedures to order voting materials, and links to other government voting websites, including a link to the FVAP website.

14. Authorize "priority" precedence when using DSN for voting assistance when it does not interfere with mission program accomplishment.

15. Ensure privacy and access to command fax machines for transmission of election materials when it does not interfere with mission program accomplishment.

16. Require Installation Voting Assistance Officers to provide their office telephone numbers and e-mail addresses to the telephone operators at their installations. Require Installation and Major command Voting Assistance Officers to update and provide a list of all unit Voting Assistance Officers' names, e-mail addresses and office telephone numbers and send it to the Service Voting Action Officer. The Service Voting Action Officer shall provide the Director, FVAP with a quarterly updated list of office telephone numbers and e-mail addresses for every Installation and Major command Voting Assistance Officer.

17. Ensure that all Armed Forces personnel receive at least one briefing, training period, or information period of instruction devoted to the absentee voting process during recruit training and within all leadership curricula and, for all members, again in each year in which elections for Federal office are held. Emphasis should be placed on the availability of voting information,

supporting materials, personal assistance, and the importance of registering and voting.

18. Ensure all Major Command, Installation and Unit Voting Assistance Officers attend an FVAP Voting Assistance Workshop during years with elections for Federal offices. If the installation is not scheduled to receive an FVAP workshop, Major Command, Installation and Unit Voting Assistance Officers should attend training at a nearby installation when possible. Voting Assistance Officers at remote locations can access the FVAP website for training.

19. Ensure on-site senior command support at each installation for FVAP training workshops and orientations held at the installation, emphasizing attendance of every Voting Assistance Officer stationed at the installation. A senior officer, O-6 or above, will be designated to represent the installation/command and introduce the program. The host Installation Voting Assistance Officer will invite Voting Assistance Officers from tenant commands and from nearby installations, and the senior command at these installations should coordinate transportation requirements to maximize attendance by Voting Assistance Officers stationed on each installation. The Service Voting Action Officers will advertise the workshop schedule within their Service.

20. Ensure recruits are provided FPCAs for themselves and their voting-age dependents during their recruit training.

21. Ensure sufficient copies of the FPCA are included in orientation packets for new and permanent change of station (PCS) personnel at all personnel centers. Personnel, including their family members, should be advised to notify their local election office of their change of address.

22. Conduct an Information Support Program along the guidelines set forth in the DoD Voting Information Support Plan, 2006-2007 at Appendix A.

23. Coordinate voting information support materials with the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program.

24. File an "After Action Report" by January 15, 2007 with the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program summarizing successes and/or problems experienced in the conduct of the Program. A checklist for and the format of this report will be provided by FVAP.

25. Assist in conducting a survey of military members, civilian employees outside the U.S., and unit Voting Assistance Officers in the manner specified by the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program.

26. Revise command/organization directives or instructions on voting assistance as necessary.

27. Provide for continuing evaluation of command voting programs.

IV. SCHEDULE

A. PHASE I -- Preparation and Initiation During Period of November 1, 2005-Spring 2006.

1. Disseminate the Federal Voting Assistance Program Action Plan 2006-2007 to Military Departments, Combatant Commands, other DoD components, and participating Federal departments and agencies.

2. Develop and implement Service, Command, Department and Agency Voting Action Plans for the 2006-2007 elections.

3. Encourage access to the FVAP Web Site (www.fvap.gov) for all voting information and materials. If Internet access is not available, ensure distribution of voting information which is available prior to publication and distribution of the *2006-07 Voting Assistance Guide* and any changes thereto.

4. Ensure procurement and distribution of FPCAs and FWABs, which are purchased by each Uniformed Service, department and agency and distributed through normal supply channels.

5. Ensure IN-HAND delivery to all Armed Forces members and their eligible family members, overseas civilian employees of DoD components and eligible family members, as required by paragraph III.C.8, above, by January 15, 2006.

6. Provide installation telephone operators with the name, mailing address, e-mail and office telephone number of the Major command and Installation Voting Assistance Officers by January 1, 2006. The Major command and Installation Voting Assistance Officers shall generate and maintain a directory containing names and office telephone numbers of all local unit Voting Assistance Officers, including tenant organizations, by January 1, 2006.

7. Service Inspectors General, through scheduled command inspections, shall review command voting assistance programs and plans and determine whether unit Voting Assistance Officers are appointed and trained and have sufficient supplies to provide voting assistance.

8. Information efforts shall begin with commanding officers and Voting Assistance Officers conducting command information programs prior to primary elections and repeating, as necessary, to inform and motivate military personnel and their family members to exercise their right to vote in primary and general elections. Family members will be encouraged to participate in these programs. Information provided shall include dates of scheduled primary and general elections and state deadlines for voter registration, absentee ballot requests, and the receipt of returned, voted ballots. Information programs can be accomplished through the use of local websites, installation newspapers,

and by placing voting materials (with Voting Assistance Officer's name, phone, e-mail address, and office location) in stationary locations such as libraries, medical and dental clinics, commissaries, exchanges, MWR facilities, schools, training facilities, and at designated locations onboard seagoing vessels.

B. PHASE II -- Registration and Primary Elections During Period of January-October 2006. This phase will require careful planning and execution of voting assistance programs in order to inform potential voters of the primary elections scheduled to begin in early 2006.

1. Voting Assistance Officers shall attend a Voting Assistance Officer Workshop and shall concentrate on providing absentee registration and voting assistance to personnel and eligible family members for Federal, state and run-off primary elections.

2. Ensure procurement and distribution of FWABs for use by Uniformed Services voters both within the U.S. and overseas and by other U.S. citizens in overseas areas. The FWAB may be used only for the general election (Federal offices) under conditions specified in the *2006-07 Voting Assistance Guide*. Some jurisdictions may expand the use of the FWAB to primary, and State and local elections. For specific information on State requirements, refer to the *2006-07 Voting Assistance Guide*.

3. Ensure availability of FPCAs to personnel overseas, as listed in paragraph III.C.8, above, by August 15, 2006.

4. Conduct "Armed Forces Voters Week" (week of September 3-9, 2006) and "Overseas Citizens Voters Week" (week of July 2-8, 2006). Develop programs to create voting awareness and to motivate absentee voters to participate in the general election. Publicize the importance of early action and planning well in advance of election deadlines by the absentee voter in order to obtain a ballot for the general election. Publicize the last date before a Federal general election for which absentee ballots mailed from that location can reasonably be expected to be timely delivered to the appropriate State and local election officials.

5. Conduct "Absentee Voters Week" (week of October 8-14, 2006). Encourage all UOCAVA voters to vote and mail their absentee ballots during this week.

6. Continue agency and command information programs and dissemination of voter information.

C. PHASE III -- Requesting Ballots for the General Election During Period of July - November 7, 2006.

1. Continue disseminating voting information.

2. Ensure availability of FPCAs to personnel within the United States, as listed in paragraph III.C.8, above, by September 15, 2006.
3. Communicate how and when to use the FWAB and recommend its use if the voter meets the criteria and does not receive the requested regular absentee ballot in sufficient time to vote and return it to be counted.

D. PHASE IV -- Evaluation During the Period of November 8 - December 31, 2006.

1. Assist, as requested, with post-election surveys of military members, overseas civilian employees and Unit Voting Assistance Officers. The survey's findings will be used in formulating plans for future voting assistance programs.
2. Participate in and support the reports as required by paragraphs III. C. 22 and 24, above.

V. ESSENTIAL MATERIALS

A. 2006-07 Voting Assistance Guide (2006-07 VAG)

1. This is the basic reference document of the Federal Voting Assistance Program and provides all Voting Assistance Officers with the necessary information to give potential voters the following assistance:
 - a. Explanation of current procedures for absentee registration and voting in each state, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the Virgin Islands.
 - b. Absentee registration and voting deadlines established by the states, territories, and other jurisdictions, along with dates of primary and general elections.
 - c. Addresses, including ZIP codes of local election officials in each state, territory, and other jurisdictions.
2. Encourage access to the FVAP Web Site (www.fvap.gov) for all voting information and materials. If World Wide Web access is not available, the initial distribution of the *Guide* to Government Departments, including the Department of Defense and the Military Services, agencies and other organizations will be followed by distribution of subsequent published changes to the basic document during the 2006-2007 time period.

B. Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) for Registration and Absentee Ballot Request (Standard Form 76).

- 1.** The FPCA, a postage-paid form, is authorized by law for use by persons covered by the *UOCAVA*. (See paragraph II above). The FPCA was revised in 2005 to include more information and to make the form more usable. The previous edition of the form (Rev. 10-95) may continue to be used until existing stocks are exhausted.
- 2.** Because there are differences in treatment accorded the FPCA by the various states and other jurisdictions, the *2006-07 Voting Assistance Guide* should be consulted to determine how each particular jurisdiction authorizes use of the FPCA by voters.
- 3.** FPCAs are requisitioned within each Uniformed Service through normal supply channels in accordance with established directives. Other government departments and agencies may requisition this form through General Services Administration (GSA) channels. It is available to citizens outside the U.S. from State Department embassies and consulates.
- 4.** An on-line version of the FPCA that is accepted by 53 states (including the District of Columbia and territories) is available at the FVAP website. This on-line version provides an alternative to citizens who cannot obtain the card stock version and must be placed in an envelope with proper postage affixed.

C. Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) (Standard Form 186).

- 1.** The FWAB is authorized by law and may be used in general elections for Federal office by Uniformed Services voters and by overseas voters who make timely application for, and do not receive, regular absentee ballots. The FWAB was revised in 2005 to include more information and to make the form more useable. The previous edition of the form (Rev. 10-95) may continue to be used until existing stocks are exhausted. For those who wish to use the FWAB, the following criteria must be met:
 - a.** The request for a regular absentee ballot must have been received by the local election official at least 30 days before the general election or the state deadline for registration/ballot request, whichever is later. (Some states may allow its use in primary and run-off elections—see the *2006-07 Voting Assistance Guide* for details.)
 - b.** The FWAB may be submitted by Uniformed Services personnel and their family members when absent from their voting residence and located either inside or outside the U.S., and by other U.S. citizens when located outside the United States. The United States is defined as the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and American Samoa.

c. The FWAB must be received by the local election official not later than the deadline for receipt of regular absentee ballots under state law.

2. All Service installations and naval vessels at sea should stock a sufficient supply of FWABs for use by voters as outlined above. Consult the *2006-07 Voting Assistance Guide* for detailed instructions on the FWAB. Additionally, some jurisdictions may authorize the FWAB to be used in state and local elections by other categories of absentee voters depending on state law. The *2006-07 Voting Assistance Guide* contains procedures which include the extent to which the FWAB may be used in each state. The FVAP will provide the widest dissemination of this information. Organizations should have available one FWAB for everyone covered by the *UOCAVA*.

NOTE: ONLY THOSE VOTERS WHO MAKE A TIMELY APPLICATION FOR THEIR REGULAR STATE BALLOT AND MEET ALL THE CRITERIA MAY USE A FWAB.

D. Other Voting Information Materials.

1. See the DoD Voting Assistance Information Support Plan (Appendix A).

E. The Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program may be contacted concerning any aspect of the program. Correspondence should be directed to:

Director	Telephone number:	(703) 588-1584
Federal Voting Assistance Program		DSN 425-1584
Department of Defense		1-800-438-8683
Washington, DC 20301-1155	E-mail address:	vote@fvap.ncr.gov
	Home Page:	www.fvap.gov
	Fax number:	703-696-1352
		DSN 426-1352

Appendix A: DoD Voting Information Support Plan 2006-2007